

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, September 26, 2006

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<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-13
Foster Care	14
Domestic Violence	15
Juvenile Justice	16
Early Childhood Development	17-18
Unemployment	19-20
Welfare Reform	21
Charities	22
Personnel	23

[<<Back](#)

Update: Local Dept. of Human Services Violations

Sep 26, 2006 06:11 AM EDT



The Jackson County office that placed Ricky Holland in the care of Tim and Lisa Holland is accused of violating state rules. A report out says workers at the Jackson County

Department of Human Services repeatedly failed to follow state licensing rules. Those allegations are made in the Detroit Free Press, which claims to have the results of a sealed state investigation.

The Detroit Free Press says state workers may have put children like Ricky Holland at risk. A state investigation into the Jackson County Department of Human Services found nine different licensing violations and workers who didn't follow through on rules aimed at protecting children in the state's foster care system. The Free Press writes that, as a result of a sealed state investigation, the license for the county office was downgraded to provisional for six months.

We tried to get answers about what a provisional license means for this department, but nobody here or at the State Department of Human Services would talk.

Rick Baxter, (R) Concord: "It puts them on notice that there is a problem that the department is aware of, that they are not doing things kosher, or at least properly."

Rick Baxter, a state lawmaker from the Jackson area, is a member of a committee looking into how the state and local system failed Ricky Holland. He says the report came as a shock.

Rick Baxter: "We're left in a situation where we're guessing, and yeah, we're introducing legislation to deal with some of the things that are obvious, but specifically we're not able to deal with it."

Baxter says seeing the finalized report would help his committee do its job. He says legislators want a copy as soon

as possible.



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Blood found in Ricky's home, court told

Spatter showed up in multiple rooms, forensic scientist says

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

Published September 26, 2006

Investigators found dozens of small blood stains in Tim and Lisa Holland's Williamston home, days after the couple told the State Journal they anxiously awaited their adopted son's return.

A forensic scientist testified Monday in Lisa Holland's murder trial about blood found on fireplace bricks, under the carpet of Ricky's bedroom and on the hallway carpet adjacent to the bedroom.

The searches happened Sept. 6, 2005, and Sept. 7, 2005.

Blood spatter also was found on the wall between a TV and a wood cabinet in the Hollands' living room.

Lisa Holland is charged with murder and child abuse in the July 2005 death of 7-year-old Ricky. Lisa's husband, Tim Holland, has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and is expected to testify against her.

Christopher Bommarito, a forensic scientist with the Michigan State Police crime lab, testified the blood was evidence of injury.

"It's not typical to find blood stains all over the place like that," he said.

Bommarito also said the stains were small, and there was no evidence of blood collecting in a pool.

In an interview published Sept. 4, 2005, Lisa Holland said she relied on hope to get through

the emotional anguish of Ricky's disappearance.

On Jan. 27, Tim Holland led authorities to the boy's remains, found in garbage bags in a marshlike area near Dansville.

Photographs of that scene were shown in court Monday for the first time.

The garbage bags containing Ricky's remains were half-submerged in a pool of ice, surrounded by patches of snow and brush.

Tears in the bags revealed debris, a blue bedsheet and parts of Ricky's bones.

Bommarito also testified Monday about the shredded remains of an orange T-shirt found in a sealed bag.

The possibly blood-stained shirt was cut or torn into more than 20 pieces.

Testimony at a preliminary hearing earlier this year revealed the T-shirt pieces were stashed in a backpack Lisa Holland tried to carry out of her home during the September searches.

The bag also contained diapers and other items.

Bommarito said he could not testify if Ricky ever wore the shirt or even if it would have fit him.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Autopsy planned today in child's death

Monday, September 25, 2006

From News staff reports

CANTON TOWNSHIP - Police investigating the death of a 2-year-old girl who died of head injuries suffered while staying in a foster home.

The girl was taken off life support and died at 4:17 p.m. Friday, 14 hours after her foster mother called 911 from the 2600 block of Emily Court in Canton Township because the child was not breathing, police said.

Detective Sgt. Rick Pomorski said the child had obvious head injuries and was taken to Annapolis Hospital, then airlifted to the University of Michigan Medical Center.

He said the 40-year-old woman who was caring for the child was the only adult with the child, and also had a 2-month-old child from the same agency that placed the toddler with her. He said the infant has been taken back by the agency.

Pomorski said the autopsy on the toddler was scheduled to take place today, and the investigation into how the child was injured continues, but that the woman had no history of child abuse.

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Autopsy finds traumatic injury on 2-year-old in Canton foster home

Probe of her death goes on, police say

BY JACK KRESNAK
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

September 26, 2006

An autopsy that began Monday on the body of a 2-year-old girl who died in a Canton Township foster home showed that she suffered a traumatic head injury, but it could not immediately determine whether the death was accidental or homicide, police said.

The child, Allison Newman, was found unresponsive and not breathing about 2 a.m. Friday in a bedroom of the foster home licensed through Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. She died early Saturday at the University of Michigan Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

An investigation into the death is continuing, said Canton police Sgt. Rick Pomorski.

Police said the girl's foster mother called 911 when she found the baby unresponsive and told them Allison had accidentally hit her head recently. She had been a temporary ward of the Wayne County Family Court since she was removed from her biological mother's care in November 2004.

Police would not confirm the foster parents' names.

According to court records, Allison's biological mother, Ann Marie Hirsch, 26, and father, Kenneth Newman, 28, were addicted to crack cocaine when Allison was taken into foster care. Officials alleged the couple didn't have a suitable home.

Newman was jailed in January 2005 and is serving sentences for resisting arrest, fleeing police, assault with a dangerous weapon and receiving and concealing stolen property.

Hirsch stopped visiting her daughter because a court referee had ordered that she could not have visits unless she submitted to random drug tests, the court records said.

When she came into foster care, Allison was described as a normal baby with no known medical problems, according to the records.

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan filed a petition to terminate the biological parents' rights to Allison in July, but no date was set after Hirsch's attorney could not provide the court with an address for his client.

The social service group's communications director, Barbara Lewis, said Monday that until proven otherwise the agency believes that the girl's death was an accident.

"At this point we don't suspect abuse of any kind," she said.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

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[Return to regular web page](#)



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September 26, 2006

Questions surround tot's foster care death

Canton Township police say an autopsy in Washtenaw County led to more tests; Lutheran Social Services removes a boy from home.

Christine Ferretti / The Detroit News

CANTON TOWNSHIP -- Two-year-old Allison Newman appeared healthy and bubbly when social services staffers visited her last week in her foster home, social workers say.

Two days later, on Friday, the girl was pulled from life support, about 14 hours after her 40-year-old foster mother found her unconscious, bruised in the head and unable to breathe.

The mystery deepened Monday, when police say a Washtenaw County autopsy led to more questions and more tests.

In the meantime, a foster care agency, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, removed another foster child, a 3-month-old boy, from the couple who had cared for him since June. He may not be returned, said Don Austin, vice president of the agency.

"We want to be certain there is no wrongdoing on their part," Austin said.

"This is the kind of thing that really is the nightmare situation for those of us who work in foster care. It is such a rare and unusual occurrence."

Canton Police Sgt. Rick Pomorski wouldn't say what the autopsy found, but said at least another week of tests is needed before declaring a cause of death.

He said investigators eventually will discuss the case with prosecutors, but he didn't characterize the case as a criminal investigation.

The foster mother told police the "child repeatedly hit her head on the side of the bed during the course of play," Pomorski said.

Calling about 2 a.m. Friday, the foster mother told a 911 operator that Allison was injured Thursday but "she was fine the rest of the day," according to a transcript of the four-minute call.

State and phone records show the house is owned by Carol and Alan Poole.

Allison was first transported to Annapolis Hospital, where her heartbeat and breathing returned, Pomorski said.

She was later airlifted to Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor, where she was on life support until she died at 4:17 p.m. Friday.

Austin said Allison was placed in foster care in November 2004 because her birth mother neglected her.

The Canton couple had cared for her since January and "hoped they may be able to adopt her," said Austin, noting there were no complaints against the couple since they became registered foster parents in December.

You can reach Christine Ferretti at (734) 462-2289 or cferretti@detnews.com.

[Return to regular web page](#)

Besander sentenced for child's death



Aimee Besander - Sentenced to prison

By STEVE BROWNLEE, Journal Staff Writer

MARQUETTE — An Ishpeming woman received the longest sentence possible for manslaughter in the suffocation death of her infant son more than a year ago.

Aimee Rose Besander, 21, was sentenced to a minimum of 57 months in prison by Judge John R. Weber in Marquette's 25th Circuit Court Monday afternoon.

The maximum term she can serve is 15 years, which is set by state statute, according to Marquette County Prosecutor Gary Walker.

Besander was accused of killing her 31/2-month-old son, Jacob Joseph Schilling, on April 16, 2005, at their Ishpeming residence.

An autopsy conducted in downstate Kent County indicated the boy's death was a homicide, concluding that he died by asphyxiation through suffocation, according to the Ishpeming City Police Department.

Sentencing guidelines allowed a minimum sentence of 29 months to 57 months, according to Walker and statements made by Weber at the end of Monday's hearing.

Besander pleaded guilty to manslaughter on Sept. 13 in exchange for the prosecution dropping a charge of open murder, which could've meant a life sentence in prison, according to circuit court documents filed with the Marquette County Clerk's office.

In addition to avoiding a trial, Besander agreed to give up her parental rights to another child, Jason Miles Schilling, who she gave birth to on May 30, 2006.

On Thursday, Besander signed a release with the Family Division of the 25th Circuit Court giving up her rights to the child, who is just a week or two older than Jacob was when he died.

"It's tragic, we have a dead infant and a young person who's going to spend a long time in prison," Walker said after the hearing. "We try to make the most sense of this, but we are also dealing with another child."

"I felt it was important to intervene for the good of the surviving child."

Until Monday's sentencing, Besander was living in Champion with her grandfather, Lowell Besander Sr., since June 2005, when 96th District Judge Dennis Girard approved the arrangement. For two months before that, she was lodged in the Marquette County Jail.

Besander had pleaded guilty to second-degree murder on Jan. 27, but in February, Weber granted a request by attorney Thomas Casselman to withdraw the plea.

The new plea agreement was drawn up and agreed to just a few weeks ago to avoid a trial that was scheduled to start next week.

At Monday's sentencing hearing, Casselman asked for leniency based on Besander's difficult upbringing. Besander, who was 19 years old at the time of her first son's death, was neglected by her own parents, according to her attorney.

"Her parents dealt with their own needs, not hers," Casselman said during the hearing. "She learned not to trust her parents or other authority figures."

She also suffered post-partum depression following Jacob's birth, Casselman said. While the death was more than simple negligence, it was not an intentional act, he argued.

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[Back](#)

Article published Sep 25, 2006

Canton police still piecing together what led to foster child's death

Canton Police received the preliminary results of an autopsy Monday afternoon for a toddler who died Friday after emergency workers transported her from her Canton foster care home in the 2600 block of Emily Court. Police officials say the girl suffered a serious head trauma.

According to Sgt. Rick Pomorski, the case is still under investigation. He said police officials should know more about what led to the girl's death by the end of the week.

"The person who performed the autopsy didn't label it a homicide and he didn't label it an accident. It's open or undetermined at this time," Pomorski said Monday afternoon.

Police were called early Friday morning, just after 2 a.m., when the 2-year-old's foster mother checked on her and discovered she was not breathing. The girl was taken to Annapolis Hospital in Wayne, and was later transported to the University of Michigan Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

Friday afternoon, police were able to find the girl's birth father and bring him to Canton from a state prison in Jackson, Mich. The hospital was able to find the girl's birth mother, and both biological parents were at the hospital to give consent to disconnect life support. She died that afternoon, Pomorski said.

At the time the 40-year-old foster mother called police, she and the toddler and another foster child, a 3-month-old baby boy, were home alone. The woman's husband was not at home, and was out of town at the time, according to police. The baby boy was placed in the care of the foster care agency on Friday.

The foster mother voluntarily went to the police station for questioning on Friday. The girl had been in her foster home since January of this year, Pomorski said.

After gun kills child, cop charged

BY CECIL ANGEL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

September 26, 2006

A veteran Detroit police officer was charged Monday with involuntary manslaughter and child abuse after a 4-year-old boy fatally shot himself with the officer's department-issued handgun last month.

The child, Kenneth Thomas, was staying at the house of Officer Louis Anderson, 58, of Detroit, along with his three children, ages 1, 3 and 5, on Aug. 10 when the boy apparently found Anderson's .40-caliber Glock handgun that he stored under a bed.

Anderson told police he was asleep when a gun blast awakened him about 12:30 a.m.

The boy was pronounced dead at Anderson's Park Grove Avenue home on the city's east side from a single gunshot wound. The child's mother was not home at the time.

Anderson, who has 31 years on the job, was arraigned in 36th District Court in Detroit. His bond was set at \$50,000 personal, which means he does not have to put up any money to be released from custody. His preliminary examination is scheduled for Oct. 24.

"This is inexcusable behavior, especially for a law enforcement office," Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said. "How many millions of times do we have to say it? Children and guns don't mix. How much time does it take to secure your guns in your home when children live there?"

Involuntary manslaughter carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison. The second-degree child abuse charge has a maximum penalty of four years.

Thomas' death was at least the second this year in Detroit involving a young child who found a loaded gun in a home.

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September 26, 2006

Oakland briefs

The Detroit News

Foster care billing plan is delayed by county

Oakland County is holding off on a resolution that would have required the Michigan Department of Human Services to directly pay foster care bills. County officials, who now pay for foster care and then get reimbursed for 50 percent by the state, say they are in ongoing negotiations with the state to improve its billing process. The county adopted a policy last year that required invoices to be in within 60 days of the last day of the month the services were provided. Since then, more than 400 foster care invoices have been rejected because they were late, according to officials.



Woman arraigned in boyfriend's slaying

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, September 26, 2006

By Kim Crawford

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A 29-year-old woman allegedly attacked her boyfriend early Friday morning with a knife and a wrench over money she wanted to buy drugs, according to a Mt. Morris Township investigator testifying in court Monday.

The woman, Keta M. James, wound up fatally injuring her boyfriend, 44-year-old Troy S. Sullivan, testified Sgt. Scott McKenna. When she returned to their apartment at 2024 Vanderbilt Circle, she found him dead and called 911, McKenna testified.

Based on McKenna's testimony, a warrant was authorized by Mt. Morris District Court Magistrate Roberta Wray, charging James with murder and armed robbery.

James, who has been held in the Genesee County Jail since Friday, was arraigned Monday before 67th District Judge Larry J. Steccho in Central District Court.

Steccho ordered her held without bond on the murder charge.

James once glanced back at tearful relatives who had traveled from Georgia and Detroit. Two women wiped tears from their eyes as James, wearing orange jail overalls and chains, was led from the courtroom by deputies to be taken back to jail.

James faces a preliminary examination on the murder and robbery charges before Judge Mark McCabe on Oct. 4 in Central District Court.

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[Back](#)

Article published Sep 26, 2006

Man helps turn lives around

By Lisa Roose-Church
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Mark Angers is the last resort for juvenile delinquents.

The Flint native is a juvenile justice specialist for the Livingston County Department of Human Services. He oversees nearly three dozen juveniles ages 12 to 21 who are wards of the state, sentenced for a variety of crimes including arson, sexual abuse and more.

"The hardest part of the job is not having enough time to spend with the youth on an individual basis," Angers said. "With anywhere from 20 to 30 youths at a time on the caseload it seems as though all we can do is crisis management."

The rewards of the job, however, make it worthwhile.

"I enjoy watching young people turn their lives around," Angers said. "It is a great feeling when you know you helped make a difference."

Angers knows all about making changes in life, having moved himself from a factory job to college to a career.

After graduating from Flint Ainsworth High School, now known as Carman-Ainsworth, where he played football, basketball and baseball, Angers worked as a supervisor for General Motors Corp. He was eventually laid off, but told he would be rehired if he earned a college degree.

Angers earned an associate's degree from Mott Community College and a bachelor's degree from University of Michigan-Flint in psychology and English.

He returned to GM as a college student in training, but left in 1990 and accepted a state job in Genesee County where he worked with the Aid for Dependent Children caseload.

He served about six years in Tuscola County working for the state's Children's Protective Services before relocating to Lapeer County.

Angers transferred to Livingston County about four years ago with the intent of staying in the CPS division. However, an opening working with delinquent children changed his mind.

"I was interested," he noted. "I like working with teenagers, and there is less stress working with delinquents than there is investigating child abuse cases."

As a juvenile justice specialist, Angers works with teenagers who have been adjudicated through Juvenile Court and placed in state custody. The youths are in residential care such as foster care or at W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Green Oak Township; some are placed in residential care in Houghton Lake, Traverse City, Vassar or Albion.

"I'm almost like their parent," Angers explained. "I set up their treatment, make up a treatment plan and when they are out of residential placement, I oversee their transition into the community."

Angers estimates he has helped more than 1,500 families during his tenure, and he credits his parents — William "Bill" and Dolores "Dolly" Angers of Swartz Creek — with providing him with a strong family background that helps him better serve the families he has encountered in his job.

When he is not working, Angers enjoys playing golf and attending sporting events, including two Super Bowls, a Rose Bowl, NCAA tournament games, and several Detroit Lions, Detroit Pistons and Detroit Tigers games.



09/25/2006

'It's a small world' at new Rainbow Child Development Center

By: Sally Rummel , Business Reporter



It's a small world after all.

Take a look around the new Rainbow Child Development Center at 3261 Owen Road in Fenton (next to Target) and you'll notice that almost everything is "miniaturized."

From a small-size, secured front door that's just the right size for toddlers and preschoolers, to playground facilities, bathrooms and more, this child care program is "age-appropriate" for all children from infants to age 12.

"Our day care setting is designed to be a comfortable, yet structured 'home away from home,'" said Director Cheri (pronounced Sha-REE) Green. "Our focus is totally on each child, working to achieve a sense of continuity between home and center."

This new facility officially opens Monday, Sept. 25, following a busy weekend of moving from its former location on Silver Parkway in Fenton. "Our goal is to have a 'seamless transition' for the children, so when they come to the center on Monday morning, they truly feel they belong here," says Green.

The former building which housed Rainbow Child Development Center will be renovated for future use as an after-school center, complete with performing arts, theater, computer lab, tutorial service and more.

Green and her staff are excited about the move, which doubles their former space and provides plenty of room for future programs.

Currently, Rainbow Child Development Center in Fenton offers day care and a "Creative Curriculum" for children from infants to age 12. It's part of a franchise that includes day care centers in five states, with Michigan as its home base.

Ironically, the owner of Rainbow Child Development Center, which has been located in Fenton for 11 years, is Patrick Fenton.

Fenton operates 28 centers in Michigan, as well as two in Indiana, two in Kentucky, six in Ohio and four in New Jersey.

Rainbow Child Development Center services include before- and after- school programs; transportation to all area elementary schools in Fenton, Linden, Holly and Hartland; morning snacks, breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks.

The "Creative Curriculum" provides a framework for teachers to plan and include developmentally appropriate activities for each age group. Infants and toddlers will have "learning centers" and preschoolers and pre-kindergartners will have "interest areas."

"We hold parent/teacher conferences three times per school year to involve parents in all levels of their child's education at the center," says Green.

She holds a B.A. in Music from Fisk University in Tennessee, an M.S. in Administration from Central Michigan University and is currently enrolled in the Health Administration doctorate program at CMU.

The center's 15-member staff include a mix of certified teachers with bachelor's degrees in Childhood Development or Early Childhood Education and center workers with a minimum of Child Development accreditation.

"But the most important attribute of our staff is their commitment to children," said Green. "We share with the parents the belief that each child is a precious gift. Our number one priority is the safety and security of each child."

Green is pleased to bring her own children to the center with her to work each day, including 3½-year-old Gabrielle and 18-month-old Grant. Their older brother, Stephen, age 16, is a junior at Fenton High School and has been actively involved in setting up the new facility.

In addition to its day care programs, Rainbow Child Development Center also offers "Premiere Preschool," an educational program designed for parents who want their children to attend an accredited preschool program, but don't require the use of day care services.

Three-year-olds meet Tuesday and Thursday and 4-year-olds meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday, all from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. "This program helps introduce young children to the concept of learning in a school setting," Green said.

Open enrollment is currently taking place at Rainbow Child Development Center. Interested parents may drop by the center for a tour, or call

(810) 629-2233.

The center is open Monday through Friday, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

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Unemployment remains high Berrien County rate stands at 7 percent

By MICHAEL ELIASOHN
H-P Business Writer

September 26, 2006

Berrien County lost 600 jobs between August 2005 and August 2006, and its unemployment rate of 7 percent last month was the county's second-highest for any August since 1999, the state says.

The highest was 7.2 percent in 2003, and the lowest was 2.9 percent in 1999. In August of last year, the county's jobless rate was 6 percent, according to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Berrien also had the highest jobless rate in August of the four Southwest Michigan counties and was the only one of the four with fewer people working last month than in August 2005.

The August jobless rate was 6 percent in Van Buren, 5.7 in Allegan and 4.8 percent in Cass.

The number of people working in Berrien County in August stood at 64,700, a figure that excludes farm workers, the self-employed and Berrien residents who work in other counties.

Since August 2005 the county has posted the following losses: manufacturing, 500 jobs (to 14,600); natural resources and construction, 200 jobs (to 2,300); professional and business, 200 jobs (to 5,100); trade, transportation and utilities, 100 jobs, (to 12,200); and "other services," 100 jobs, (to 2,900).

Gains since August of last year came in education and health, 200 jobs, (to 9,800); leisure and hospitality, 100 jobs (to 7,400); and government, 200 jobs (to 7,200).

The numbers stayed the same in both Augusts in Berrien in the categories of information, 900, and financial activities, 2,300.

The unemployment rate for

Berrien fell from 7.9 percent in July to 7.0 percent in August, based on a county labor force of 75,200. That includes all county residents, regardless of where they work, plus farm workers, the self-employed and county residents looking for work.

Using that measure, the number of county residents with jobs anywhere, including farm workers and the self-employed, increased by only 50 from July.

However, the number of jobs in the county, excluding farm workers and the self-employed, increased by 500 from July to August, to 64,700. Of that increase, DLEG labor market analyst Leonidas Murembya said, 300 jobs were attributed to auto parts industry workers being recalled after temporary layoffs to retool for model changeovers and to 100 public education employees returning to work after summer vacation.

The DLEG bases unemployment rates on the number of county residents working anywhere, including farm workers and the self-employed, plus county residents looking for

work, Murembya said.

In Allegan County, the number of county residents working increased by 225 from August 2005 to 52,850 last month. Cass also had an increase of 225, to 26,825, and Van Buren had an increase of only 25, to 38,325.

Although the number of Berrien County residents with jobs fell by 600 from August 2005, the county labor force, defined as the total of people with jobs and people looking for work, increased by 300 to 80,900.

October Welfare Target To Be Missed

MIRS, Monday, September 25, 2006

The federal government says by Oct. 1, Michigan needs to have 50 percent of its single-parent families in a job. The state won't make it and faces possible federal sanctions.

Sharon **PARKS**, of the Michigan League for Human Services, reported the state is about halfway toward that goal with 23 percent recipients in jobs.

"We have a ways to go," she told *MIRS*. But on the upside, she is confident the state can avoid any federal penalties, which are not likely until 2008 or 2009. In the meantime, the welfare advocate believes the state will beef up its efforts to boost the figure through the new JET (Jobs, Education, Training) program.

She hopes that recipients who go back to school or get into job training programs will be counted among the employed by the feds. But she conceded that hitting 50 percent "is going to be very hard given our unemployment rate."

"In all likelihood we'll be able to avoid either some or all of that penalty," she said.

On another topic, Parks said she is disappointed in the welfare drug testing bill that cleared in the House last week just before lawmakers went back on the campaign trail.

"It's an election year and it's unfortunate that low-income people who receive cash assistance are always up for grabs," Parks said.

However, she said this bill is better than the last one that was declared unconstitutional because it was a random testing program. This new proposal orders the drug test when there is a suspicion about drug usage.

"This bill is better than prior bills (and) comes closer to complying with the court order," she said.

Parks agrees with the bill's sponsor that recipients should not be on drugs, but she said legislators also need to address the drug treatment part of the equation, which is not covered in this latest plan.

[Print Page](#)

Helping county's needy is goal of Salvation Army director

By CHERYLL WARREN Argus-Press Staff Writer

Monday, September 25, 2006 10:24 AM EDT

Matt Rowland grew up with The Salvation Army, and he feels that his role as service extension director at The Salvation Army Service Center in Owosso is a natural place for him to be.

"I went to a lot of summer camps, music camps and Bible camps while I was growing up," said Rowland, who is proud of the role played around the world by The Salvation Army.

"We do lots of ministry here," he said. "One case worker is booked solid."

Rowland also said The Salvation Army helps with utilities, eviction notices and emergency lodging. They can place people in a hotel for a couple of nights.

The Salvation Army also cooks and serves lunch Monday and Wednesday through Friday, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

"Lunch is open to anyone. It can be someone who does not have money, or it can be someone who just wants to have someone else to talk to," Rowland said.

Rowland also said he has many goals for the Army.

"One of my goals as a new director here is to build partnerships," he said. "I would like to build whatever partnerships I can."

One of the partnerships Rowland envisions is bringing more people in to cook for the lunch program.

"I'd like to have more volunteers come in to cook and understand the different situations people have," he said.

The Salvation Army Christmas Kettle Drive was down last year. Rowland hopes to build that program into a stronger program this year.

"Anyone who wants to help can sign up for one hour or one day," said Rowland.

One of Rowland's immediate goals for the Service Center is building up the food pantry.

"Our pantry upstairs is pretty bare. Our pantry downstairs is pretty bare, and we use our pantry downstairs to stock the pantry upstairs," he said. "It's been a rough summer for a lot of people. I would like to build our pantry back up."

Rowland said that canned goods are particularly needed right now, and that people can drop off items for the pantry anytime the center is open. He also said that money donations for the pantry are important, as well.

"We get a lot of food from the food bank and from the Red Cross in Lansing. It just depends on whether we can afford to go to the food bank," he said.

Rowland continues as a member of the Flint Citadel with which he grew up, but hopes for a time in the future that the Service Center in Owosso could be a Salvation Army church again.

Currently, the Service Center is being remodeled in preparation for an open house on Oct. 5. The community will be invited to stop into the Service Center from noon until 2 p.m.

The Salvation Army Service Center is located at 302 East Exchange St., and may be reached at 725-7485. Hours at the Service Center are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Michigan Report

September 25, 2006

CAPITAL NOTEBOOK

SCHLINKER JOINS A.A.R.P.: Stephanie Schlinker has joined AARP of Michigan as its associate state director of communications. Previously she was director of public relations for the Department of Human Services.